

HEALTH CARE BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS**CHAPTER: 1****SECTION: 1.1****TITLE: OVERVIEW - SPINA BIFIDA HEALTHCARE PROGRAM**

AUTHORITY: Public Law 108-183, 38 CFR 17.900-17.905**RELATED REFERENCES:** 38 USC 1804; 38 USC 1805

I. EFFECTIVE DATE

A. October 1, 1997, the Spina Bifida Health Care Program provides health benefits for Vietnam veterans' birth children diagnosed with spina bifida.

B. December 16, 2003, the Spina Bifida Health Care Program provides health benefits for Korea veterans' birth children diagnosed with spina bifida.

II. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of VA health care benefits, spina bifida is defined as all forms or manifestations of spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta) including complications or associated medical conditions related to spina bifida according to scientific literature. Spina bifida is a Latin term that means open spine. It is a congenital birth defect characterized by defective closure of the bones surrounding the spinal cord. The spinal cord and its covering (meninges) may protrude through the defect. The exposure of spinal cord nerves usually results in damage at the point of exposure. The damage of the nerves further results in limited brain signals to the body below where the damage has occurred, and limited communication to and from the brain frequently causes reduced development of normal body function.

III. DESCRIPTION

A. Information regarding the provision of the Spina Bifida Vocational Training and Rehabilitation Program is found in 38 USC 1804.

B. Information regarding the monetary allowance afforded spina bifida beneficiaries, by the Veterans Benefit Administration, is found in 38 USC 1805.

IV. POLICY

Health care benefits available under this program and described in this manual are limited to those necessary for the treatment of spina bifida and related medical conditions. In general, the program covers most health care services and supplies that are medically or psychologically necessary for the treatment of conditions related to spina bifida (see [Chapter 2, Section 2](#), *General Medical Benefits*).

V. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Administration of the program is centralized to VA's Health Administration Center (HAC) in Denver, Colorado. HAC is responsible for all aspects of the Spina Bifida Health Care Program, including the authorization of health care benefits and the subsequent processing and payment of claims.

VI. EXCLUSIONS

A. Spina bifida occulta. This condition is a defect of the bony spinal canal without protrusion of the cord or meninges.

B. Care unrelated to spina bifida.

END OF POLICY